



**New York State
Department of Civil Service**

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Guide To Taking The Written Test For Caseworker Series

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Guide
To Taking The Written Test For

CASEWORKER
SERIES



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INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this Guide to familiarize you with the Caseworker Series written tests. It provides a general description of the subject areas to be tested and the different types of questions you will likely see on any of the tests in this series. The Examination Announcement will specify the exact subject areas to be included on the specific test you will be taking.

The Caseworker Series has an overall time allowance of 3 hours. The test is divided into three subject areas and the questions are designed to evaluate the following abilities:

- 1. ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS IN A SOCIAL CASEWORK SETTING:** These questions test for an understanding of the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of productive client-worker relationships. You will be provided with descriptions of specific client-worker interactions and asked to select the appropriate responses. The questions cover such topics as confidentiality, time management, professional ethics, and referral techniques.
- 2. INTERVIEWING (CASEWORKER):** These questions test for an understanding of the principles and techniques of interviewing and their application to specific client-worker situations. You will be provided with a series of concrete interviewing situations for which you will be required to select an appropriate course of action based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. You will also be asked questions about the interviewing process and various interviewing techniques.
- 3. PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately and to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly. For some questions, you will be given information in two or three sentences followed by four restatements of the information. You must then choose the best version. For other questions, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order and then asked to choose from four suggestions the best order for the sentences.

The remainder of this guide explains how you are tested in each of these subject areas. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject. This is an explanation of how a question is presented and how to correctly answer it. Be sure to read each one carefully.

You will also be given at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. It will be of the type that you will see on the actual test. The **SOLUTION** and correct answer are provided after each question. You should study the question and its solution until you understand how it works.

SUBJECT AREA 1

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS IN A SOCIAL CASEWORK SETTING: These questions test for an understanding of the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of productive client-worker relationships. You will be provided with descriptions of specific client-worker interactions and asked to select the appropriate responses. The questions cover such topics as confidentiality, time management, professional ethics, and referral techniques.

TEST TASK: You are given questions that describe specific client-worker situations. You must determine which of the responses and/or reactions supplied would be most appropriate. Note: You may be able to think of a better approach than any of the ones supplied, but you must limit yourself to the choices provided, and pick the best one of those.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

A client has been unemployed for two years. She has tried to hold a job but has failed each time. She has come to you for help in securing employment. From your initial meetings with her there are indications that she's not sincere about getting and keeping a job. Which one of the following is the best way to handle this situation?

- A. Discuss job possibilities and direct the client to the appropriate employment agencies.
- B. Suggest to the client that a probable reason for her past failure is that she really doesn't want to work.
- C. Ask her opinion on why she has been unable to keep a job.
- D. Ask her to explain why she thinks she needs a job.

The best answer is C.

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, you must examine each of the choices.*

Choice A ignores the client's problem. She has been unable to hold a job, and merely discussing job possibilities and referring her to employment agencies without addressing this problem is unlikely to help her obtain and keep a job.

Choice B is negative and confrontational. The client may become defensive and hostile. She may not recognize the fact that her behavior causes a problem. This will not help to engage her in a constructive dialogue to help find a solution.

Choice D deals with "why she thinks she needs a job." This does not address the point of the interview- the client's inability to hold a job.

Choice C is the best option among the choices given. The client is asked for her opinions about why she has been unable to hold a job, rather than being told a probable reason as in choice B. This approach is much more likely to lead to an open and productive discussion in which the client herself can see that she has a problem, and in which you can be seen as an ally in helping her rather than an accuser. Also it may reveal some issues you are still not aware of which may contribute to the client's failure to hold a job.

SUBJECT AREA 2

INTERVIEWING (CASEWORKER): These questions test for an understanding of the principles and techniques of interviewing and their application to specific client-worker situations. You will be provided with a series of concrete interviewing situations for which you will be required to select an appropriate course of action based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. You will also be asked questions about the interviewing process and various interviewing techniques.

TEST TASK: You are given questions that describe specific client-worker situations. You must select the most appropriate course of action based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies.

Note: You may be able to think of a better approach than any of the ones supplied, but you must limit yourself to the choices provided, and pick the best one of those.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

You have been interviewing a client and you have enough information to make the required decisions. However, the client just will not stop talking, and is repeating in slightly different words the information that he has already given you.

Which one of the following is the best way to deal with this situation?

- A. Tell the client that the interview time is up and that if he has more to say, you can set up another appointment for the near future.
- B. Thank the client for coming in. Tell him that his information has been very helpful and that you will contact him if you need additional information.
- C. Tell the client that you would like to hear more but that it will have to be postponed to some future date.
- D. Thank the client for coming in, but explain that there are others waiting and you must end the interview.

The best answer is B

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, you must examine each of the choices.*

Choice A gives the initiative to the client, and may lead to an unnecessary appointment. You already have enough information, and there is no need for another appointment in the near future.

Choice C, like choice A, may result in the scheduling of an unnecessary appointment, and leaves the initiative in the hands of the client. An additional problem is that "some future date" contradicts "wanting to hear more."

Choice D begins well; thanking the client for coming in is positive. However, this choice gives the client the impression that you are rushing him out, and that you are more concerned with the people who are waiting than you are with him.

Choice B is best. By thanking the client for coming in, you are being positive. By telling him how helpful his information has been, you continue in this positive direction. Lastly, by telling him that you will contact him if you need additional information, you make it clear that you have the necessary data, and you maintain the initiative to schedule another appointment.

SUBJECT AREA 3

PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL: These questions test how well you can express yourself in writing. Particular emphasis will be placed upon two major aspects of written communication: how to clearly and accurately express given information, and how to present written material in the most logical and comprehensible manner.

TEST TASK: There are two separate test tasks in this subject area. In the first task, **Information Presentation**, you will be presented with information and required to identify the best method of clearly and accurately presenting the information. In the second task, **Paragraph Organization**, you will be presented with a group of sentences and required to arrange them in the order that is most logical and comprehensible.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Information Presentation

Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions. His failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

QUESTION: Which one of the following best presents the information above?

- A. Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions that caused a personal injury accident.
- B. Proper precautions, which Martin Wilson failed to take, caused a personal injury accident.
- C. Martin Wilson's failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.
- D. Martin Wilson, who failed to take proper precautions, was in a personal injury accident.

The answer is C.

SOLUTION: *Choices A and B both convey the idea that the proper precautions caused the accident. Choice D states that Wilson was in a personal injury accident; the information presented states that Wilson caused a personal injury accident, but we don't know if Wilson was in the accident. Choice C is the ONLY choice that accurately restates the information presented*

Paragraph Organization

The following question is based upon a group of sentences. The sentences are shown out of sequence, but when they are correctly arranged they form a connected, well-organized paragraph. Read the sentences and then answer the question about what order to arrange them in.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a human services job, people usually think about several possibilities.
3. They imagine themselves in different situations, and in so doing, they probably think about their interests, goals, and abilities.
4. Choosing among occupations in the field of human services is an important decision to make.

QUESTION: Which one of the following is the best arrangement of these sentences?

- A. 2-4-1-3
- B. 2-3-4-1
- C. 4-2-1-3
- D. 4-2-3-1

The answer is D.

SOLUTION: Choices A and C present the information in a poorly organized way. The key element is that sentence 1's "all of this information" comes *BEFORE* sentence 3, which contains the information to which sentence 1 refers.

Choice B is also poorly organized. It separates sentence 1's "all of this information" from the information in sentence 3 to which it refers. It places sentence 4 between sentences 1 and 3. There is nothing in sentence 4 to which "all of this information" can refer.

The best arrangement of the sentences is 4-2-3-1. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "choosing an occupation in the field of human services." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice. Choice D is the **BEST ANSWER** to the question.

CONCLUSION

You and your feelings about tests have a great deal to do with how you perform on a test. Some people get so tense and nervous that they don't do as well as they could. They forget things they know or make simple mistakes. The following suggestions should help you overcome these problems.

- Study and review this Guide to become familiar with the test contents.
- Give yourself plenty of time to do what you need to do before the test starts. Arrive at the test room a little ahead of the starting time.
- Try to relax just before the test starts.
- Listen carefully to the instructions the Monitors give you. Carefully read all instructions on the Candidate Directions you are given at the test as well as information on the covers of the test booklets.
- Try to keep calm, cool and collected throughout the test.
- Keep track of time.

It is the policy of the New York State Department of Civil Service to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure effective communication of information to individuals with disabilities. If you need an auxiliary aid or service to make this information available to you, please contact the New York State Department of Civil Service Public Information Office at (518) 457-9375.

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